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Scholarships for LGBT students

Our Enrichment Scholarship specifically benefits academically qualified students from minority groups—including LGBT students. The scholarship covers one-third of tuition. More than that, it underscores our commitment to affirming the identities and advancing the dreams of each individual student.

A wealth of programs and resources

We support our LGBT students through a variety of campus organizations and events. The student group EQUAL (Elmhurst Queers and Allies) promotes awareness through events and advocacy. SAFE (Staff, Administrators and Faculty for Equality) offers a support network for the LGBT community. An annual guestship and other special events focus on issues of concern to the LGBT community. Our faculty is adding courses in LGBT studies.

A step ahead of the rest

"In a small but meaningful step, Elmhurst College is now officially telling applicants that gay students are welcome on campus. The private liberal arts college is the first college in the U.S. to ask potential students about their sexual orientation or gender identity on its application.... The question is meant to increase diversity at the school, which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, and to direct incoming students toward services that might ease their transition into college life. It's also a strong signal that the school will embrace LGBT students and will do its best to support them."

—*Chicago Sun-Times*, August 26, 2011

"People at Elmhurst are accepting and supportive, from the faculty and staff to my friends and fraternity brothers. My experience here has helped me embrace my sexuality and become the person I am today."

JOEY CARRILLO



"Elmhurst College does a great job of nurturing and supporting LGBT students. Coming out was hard for me, but I've been blessed to have an accepting community to come out to."

FELICIA DIAZ



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Erin Schwab, the 2011 winner of the *Lavender* Fab 50 Local Musician Award. Photo by Sophia Hantzes



Photo by Sophia Hantzes

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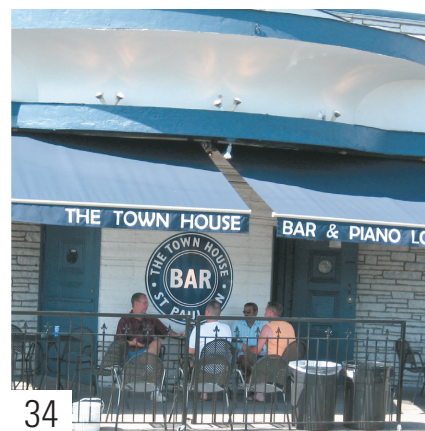


Photo Courtesy of The Town House

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Photo by John Michael Lerma

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Correction

On page 20 of the November 17 *Lavender*, in the Bartender Spotlight on Andrew of the 19 Bar, an incorrect photo was published. Here is the correct photo of him that should have run.

Photo by George Holdgrafer



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This is our first Local Music Issue. Are you kidding? Every issue could be a Local Music Issue. Every issue *should* be a Local Music Issue.

Under an early deadline, I'm listening to Rogue Valley's "Onward and Over" right now as I'm typing this letter, a wee bit frantic. This morning, I drove to the office with the soon-to-be-released Minnesota Beatle Project Vol. 3 playing old songs done in new ways by the likes of Cloud Cult, Charlie Parr, Cantus, and the Anoka Middle School for The Arts. Tuesday, I received no fewer than eleven press releases for Holiday music shows happening in the upcoming weeks. Monday, we shot the cover with Erin Schwab at The Town House just a day after I'd heard her open up the Charlie Awards at the Pantages with a rousing rendition of "Be Our Guest" Sunday afternoon. Sunday evening, those of us at the Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil closed the ceremony with "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." The other weekend, people gathered at Blue Moon Coffee Cafe to hear Ann Reed perform and raise money to fight the anti-marriage amendment.

Music is soothing. It's reminiscent. It's new. It's seasonal. It's celebratory. It's theatrical. It's an obituary. It's political.

Music is around us. People here steep in the arts, no matter what our heritage. Drum circles happen. Gospel moves. Strings pull us. Woodwinds mellow. Rock courses through veins. Rhythm makes us move. The moment a voice finds harmony with another is ecstasy.

The welcoming arms of music have always been a safe haven.

It's now December. Time for the holidays, time for memories, time for warmth and welcoming.

I was born in St. Paul, squalling in four-part harmony in Bethesda Hospital's nursery. I can't *not* find music. I might be the one standing next to you at a candlelit service, singing the alto part. Or, I may be rubbing elbows with you at the the Mixed Blood Theater (Erin Schwab, December 10-11), Ginkgo Coffeehouse (Ellis's annual food drive, December 16), or the Varsity Theater (Rogue Valley, December 21). Perhaps we'll sit next to each other at the TCGMC show at Tedd Mann Concert Hall—I love me some swing. Or, maybe we'll ring in the New Year together?

I hope you find time to find music this season. Or, let it find you.

Many thanks,
Andy □



Erin Schwab and Holly Monnett at The Town House (top). Ann Reed at Blue Moon Coffee Café. Photos by Sophia Hantzes

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WHETHER YOU consider AIDS—and the AIDS afflicted—to be an abomination, a thing that “doesn’t affect my life;” a vague jumble of vast numbers, or the face of friends and loved ones lost to an implacable disease, it is a fact, and it is not going away.

If you’re in the first group, choosing to dismiss AIDS altogether or think it can’t affect you and yours—think again. You could, if you wish to dismiss the actual suffers, consider the bottom line: the myriad orphaned children, the lost manhours affecting global economies, the medical costs of tending to the afflicted.

However you come to it, do think about AIDS and the fact that it is not going to go away unless you (we all) think about it and do something. World AIDS Day was started on 1st December 1988, and is about raising money, increasing awareness, fighting prejudice and improving education. It is an important way to remind people that HIV has not gone away, and that there is much to be done.

According to UNAIDS estimates, there are now 33.3 million people living with HIV, including 2.5 million children. During 2009 some

2.6 million people became newly infected with the virus and an estimated 1.8 million people died from AIDS.

It has become something of a cliché to quote John Donne’s oft-repeated “No man is an island...” but less emphasized that he penned Meditation XVII in celebration of surviving a 20-day bout of sickness, gazing intimately into the abyss of isolation and mortality during the London’s typhus epidemic of October, 1623.

The famous lines are just part of this longer piece in which he also wrote, “As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon, calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come: so this bell calls us all: but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness” and then, “No man is an island, entire of itself...any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

And still does. Take this December 1st to consider Donne’s words. It will take all Mankind working together to reach Zero. □



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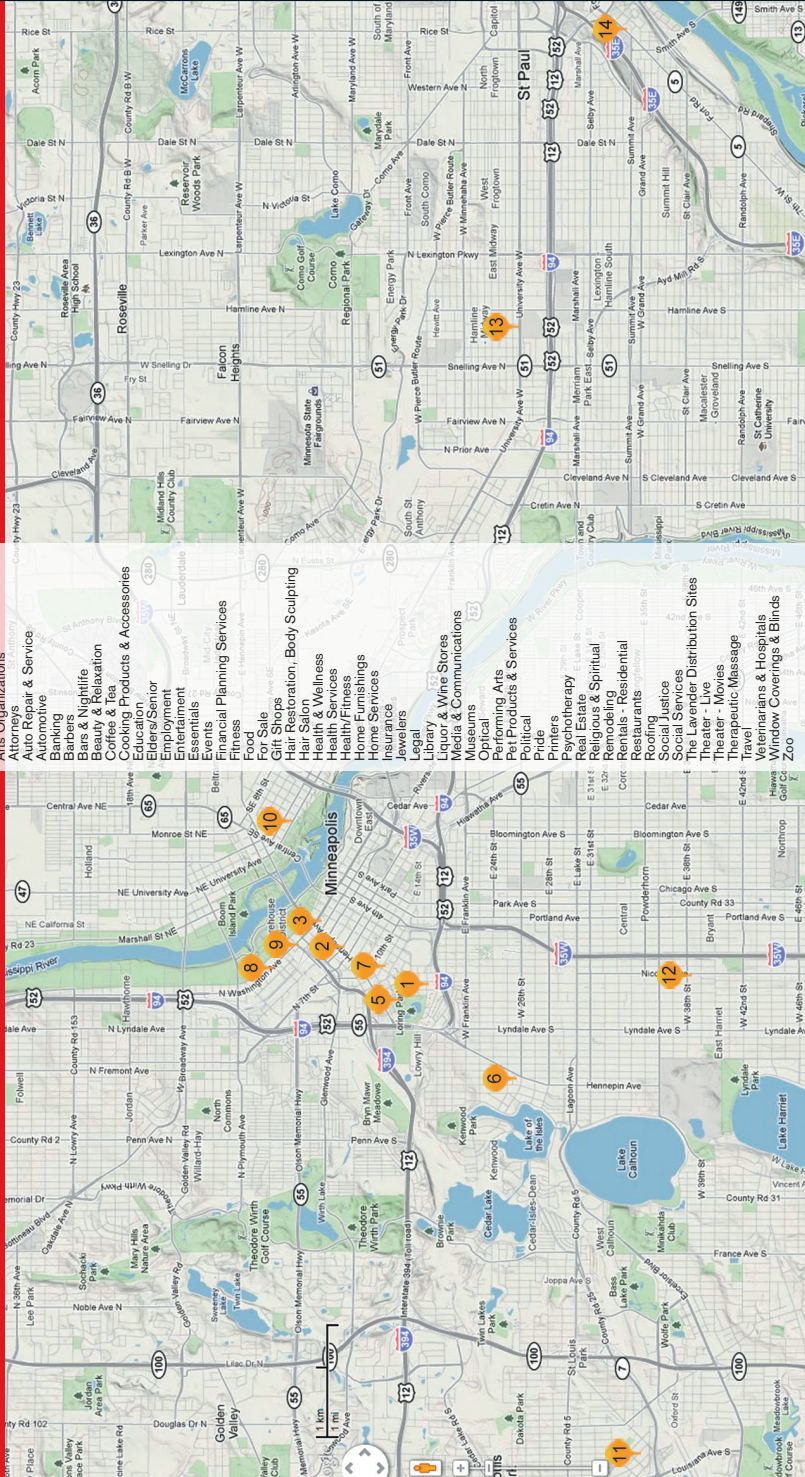
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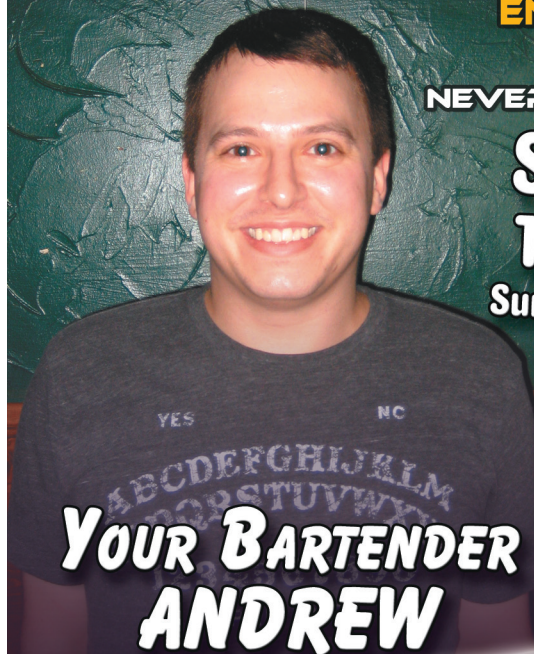
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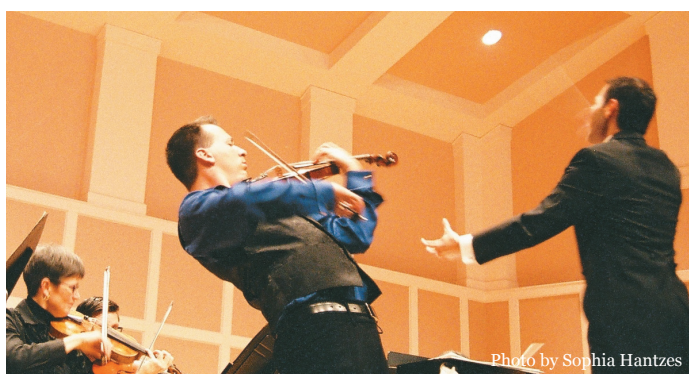
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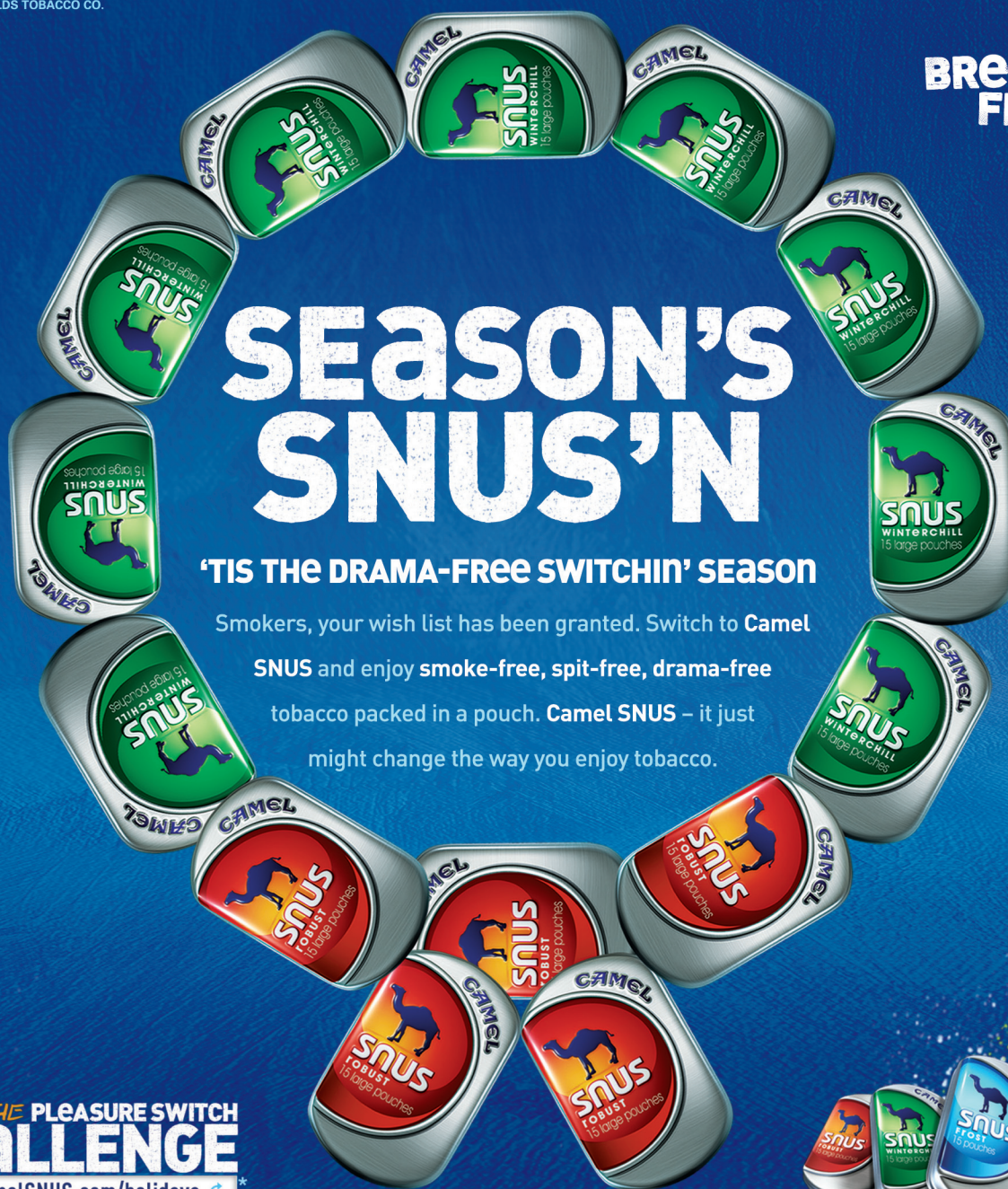
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ERIN SCHWAB

Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Erin Schwab knows how to work a song, and an audience. She's built that up over a career in musical theater with the likes of *Tina 'n' Tony's Wedding* and the national tour of *School House Rock Live!* That experience allows her to tackle just about anything under the sun, from covers of tunes by the Police to a selection from *Avenue Q* to originals based on her years as a working performer. Meanwhile, her warm approach and ability to work a crowd can be heard at local gigs at places like Hell's Kitchen or her album, *Martinis & Cleavage*. www.erinschwab.com



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DESSA

Photo Courtesy of Dossa

Dossa seems as comfortable performing in the expanse of The Fitzgerald in St. Paul as the confines of the 7th Street Entry, and her fans are willing to follow her to both ranges, selling out those respective recent shows. Part of that comes from her sterling debut album, *A Badly Broken Code*, a resident of numerous “best of” lists, but much of it also comes from her amazing live presence. In concert, she and her band have completely recast those songs, bringing out dimensions only hinted at in the original grooves. The fruit of that labor can be heard on her recently released “remix” album, *Castor, The Twin*. In turn, that makes the promise of a new full length in 2012 all the more captivating. Read more about Dossa and Doomtree at www.doomtree.net/dossa



BRUTE HEART

Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Brute Heart takes on its music from an oblique angle, jamming together folk, world and pop elements into a stunning, unique sound. The trio’s two albums, including this year’s *Lonely Hunter*, feature spare arrangements fueled by percussion and violin, with a sound that’s like some kind of Middle-Eastern Velvet Underground. The band lists eastern folk music, heavy 1960s rock, David Byrne and Brian Eno among their influences, all turning on a goal to be “unique and accessible.” Their sound has made Brute Heart local favorites on The Current and Radio K and popular in live gigs at places like the Turf Club, the 7th St. Entry and the Hexagon. www.facebook.com/pages/Brute-Heart



ELLIS

Photo by Alessandro DeSogos



Photo by Ann Marsden

LORI DOKKEN

This native Texan has made Minnesota her home for many years, issuing seven albums over that time. The sometimes spare music highlights her gentle-but-powerful voice and a warm, sensitive approach to music and life. She can be found touring around the country, playing at least 100 dates a year (everywhere from concert halls to private house shows), often along the Women's/LGBT circuit. Her live performances have earned plenty of kudos over the years, as have her songwriting and albums. In fact, she was recently named the Midwest finalist for the New Song Mountain Stage Contest. In concert, Ellis brings a confidence born of years of performing, often bridging the gap between singer and audience. www.ellis-music.com

Lori Dokken is here to warm your Minnesota winter, providing classic piano-bar entertainment at venues throughout the Twin Cities each and every week. Three decades of professional work has finely honed Dokken's music and stage show, as she seamlessly moves from style to style, all focused on bringing the audience a memorable night on the town at places like the Camp Bar (where she holds a regular singer showcase) or The Town House Bar in St. Paul. She's also a tireless fundraiser and advocate, organizing and hosting benefits for local HIV/AIDS support organizations, along with teaching and supporting young musicians. www.loridokken.com



SICK OF SARAH

Photo by Mike Minehart

The Twin Cities have a long legacy of spicy rockers running back decades, and Sick of Sarah are eager to take up that mantel. These rockers (who, incidentally, are also women) play tuneful, punky and driving rock music, splitting between the music's pure raw edge and subtle touches (vocal harmonies) that bring to mind the best the genre can bring to the game. Last year's 2205 showcased the band's breadth, while national tours have broadened their appeal. Locally, they are perfectly at home at the likes of the 7th Street Entry and the Triple Rock Social Club. www.sickofsarah.com

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THE NEW STANDARDS

Photo by Travis Anderson

Born of an alliance of local rock and jazz legends, The New Standards have a deceptively simple concept: recast rock and pop classics and hits into jazz-tinged “standards.” It’s no musical stunt, as the new arrangements bring fresh life to the likes of the Velvet Underground, the Clash, OutKast and the Replacements. With Chan Poling (The Suburbs), John Munson (Trip Shakespeare and Semisonic) and Steve Roehm (Electropolis) crafting unique, clever and catchy songs at every turn, it’s no surprise that the trio can easily sell out the likes of First Avenue and The Fitzgerald Theatre, where they present an annual Christmas concert. Those missing out on the action in 2011 don’t need to worry, a holiday album is promised for this season. www.thenewstandards.com



Photo by Jacqueline Ouanes

ROGUE VALLEY

Few artists would even want to try writing, recording and releasing a quartet of albums over a 12-month span and fewer still could pull it off with as much style and just plain quality as Chris Koza did on Rogue Valley's seasonally themed quartet. Like the music Koza releases under his own name, the Rogue Valley albums showcase a talent who is lyrically honest and musically adventurous, building breathtaking sets of music over the course of each album. Typically when an artist releases this much music in a short span of time, it means they need an editor. Koza just has that much to say, which you can also enjoy in the band's brilliant gigs around town (when he's not building his national reputation) at the likes of the Dakota and the Varsity Theater. www.lostinroguevalley.com



JEREMY MESSERSMITH

Photo Courtesy of Jeremy Messersmith

The creator of 2010's terrific *The Reluctant Graveyard* doesn't ever stop, even when between albums. Recently, the singer-songwriter has issued several stand-alone tunes, including the Occupy Wall Street-inspired "Blue Sky (Corporations are People My Friend)." Messersmith's folk-tinged pop and somewhat off-kilter subject matter (see above, along with the likes of "A Girl, a Boy, and a Graveyard") have made him not just a star on the Minnesota indie scene, but a favorite across the country. That doesn't mean you won't find him on the occasional Twin Cities gig at the Cedar Cultural Center or First Avenue. www.jeremymessersmith.com



Photo by Paul Nixdorf

STAN HILL

Dr. Stan Hill will retire as the director of the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus at the end of the 2011-2012 season, ending a term that is the longest in the 30-year history of the group. Hill has loved working the group and their infectious sense of joy. "We all know that going to a choir concert can be less than exhilarating, but they put so much of themselves in every song in a given concert that our catch phrase 'Entertainment worth coming out for' seems absolutely spot-on," he said. The chorus' current season includes a holiday show, a world premiere of a work by Michael Shaieb and Hill's finale, *They Sang to Me*. www.tcgmc.org

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Tina Schlieske. Photo by Sophia Hantzes



Chastity Brown. Photo by Sophia Hantzes



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Jacob Sustaita Debuts with the Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra

THE MINNESOTA Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), America's first GLBTA orchestra, welcomes Jacob Sustaita as its new Music Director and Conductor, the first in more than a decade. Sustaita took the podium this fall to open the MPO's 19th concert season.

Commented Board president Rebecca Eilers, "We are so excited to have Jacob join us as the new conductor of the MPO. His enthusiasm and musical talent have already been very inspiring to our members, as it will undoubtedly be evident to our audience."

Sustaita recently completed his Master of Arts degree in orchestral conducting at Pennsylvania State University under the tutelage of Gerardo Edelstein, and has served as Music Director at the Pennsylvania State Opera in 2010, as well as for the Southeast Texas Youth Symphony from 2006-2009. He was recently appointed Assistant Conductor

at Moores Opera Center in Houston.

Native Texan Sustaita comes to the MPO as an accomplished violist, earning a Master of Arts degree in viola performances a Viola Fellow at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, studying with James Dunham. He has also studied with Rita Porfiris and Wayne Brooks of the Houston Symphony.

"Preparing for my first concert with the MPO has truly been one of the most rewarding and warm experiences of my musical life," said Sustaita. "I can't thank the members and staff of the orchestra enough for their hard work and dedication to making classical music available to our community."

The MPO was founded in 1993 as America's first GLBTA orchestra and remains one of only a handful of GLBTA-affiliated orchestras worldwide. The MPO's mission is to seek to provide diverse arts entertainment of the

highest quality, resulting in increased visibility for the musical talents of the GLBTA community.

Predicted Sustaita, "The future is bright for the MPO. We have amazing plans for next year's 20th anniversary season. Our first concert will be a real turning point for the orchestra and myself. I am excited and amazed at the quality and intensity of the music making."

"Planning has already begun for the MPO's 20th anniversary season," added Eilers. "We look forward to revisiting the MPO's past and breaking new ground in the future with our new conductor Jacob." □



Photo by Sophia Hantzes



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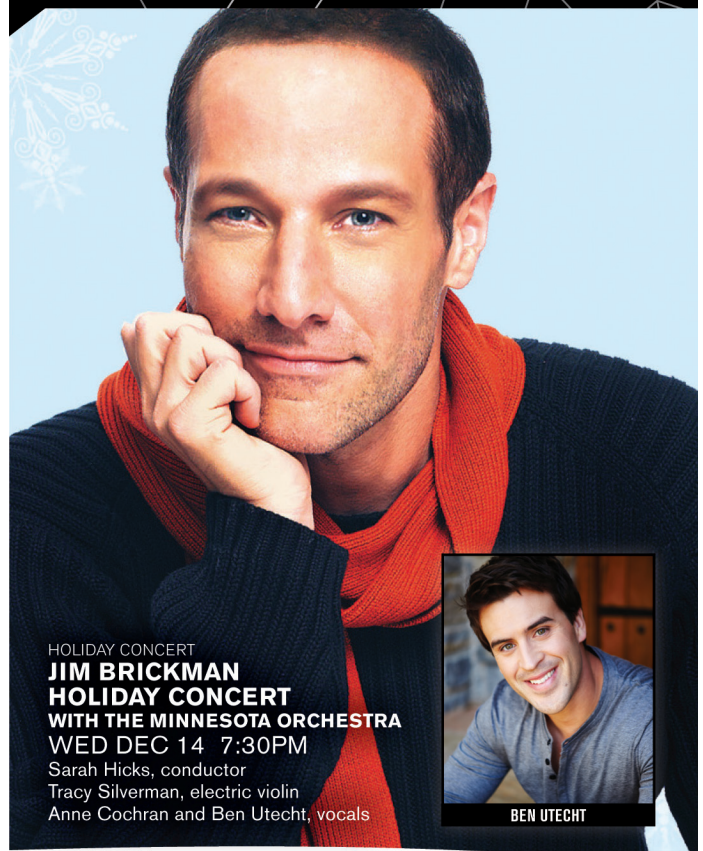
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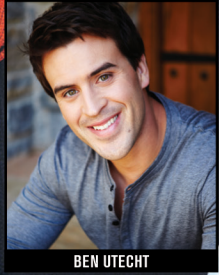
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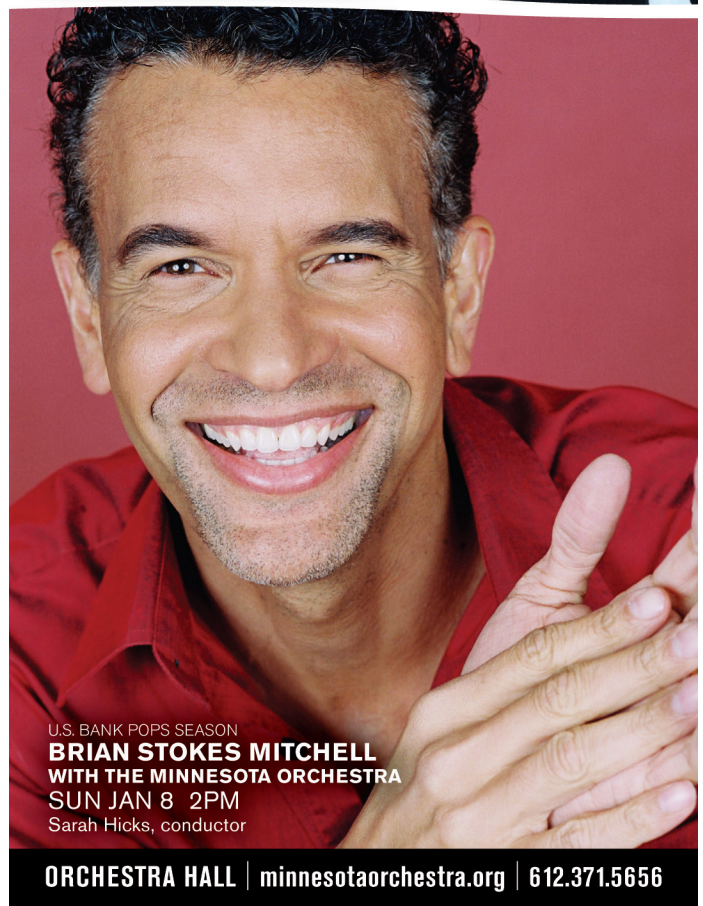


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Photo courtesy of the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus

Yule Be Swingin' with the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus

Dr. Stan Hill, Artistic Director of the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus, announces proudly of the upcoming *Yule Be Swingin'*, "This concert features the big sounds of Big Band jazz and we are delighted to be working with McNally Smith College's Jazz Band as we celebrate the golden age of the Big Band era with sounds of the season."

Audiences snuggling in at the UMN's Ted Mann Concert Hall December 9, 10, and 11 will delight to an evening replete with jazzy riffs on "Jingle Bells" and "Let it Snow," along with a new, over-the-top interpretation of "Winter Wonderland." Not enough? Discover new favorites: "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus," "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas," "Little Jack Frost," and "A Musicological Journey through the Twelve Days of Christmas!" Proclaims TCGMC, "Think Benny Goodman,

Duke Ellington, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra with a dash of Mad Men."

Chris Mellin, 2nd Tenor and Board member, puts it this way: "*Yule Be Swingin'* is a light-hearted, swinging romp of secular holiday tunes from the '40s & '50s, and definitely appropriate for all ages—the kiddies will love "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas," while music purists will truly enjoy "Stars I Shall Find," by David Dickau.

"The addition of the McNally Smith X-Tet (the 13-piece jazz ensemble who will be performing with us) really energizes the production. I love singing with a live band, and can't wait to pull it all together. When I saw the line-up of music, I couldn't wait to start rehearsing. There are some really tight, jazzy arrangements. The audience is going to eat it UP!" Mellin assures, adding, "TC-

GMC's holiday concert is my sister's favorite way to kick off the holiday season."

Formed in 1981, Twin Cities Men's Chorus added the word "gay" to its title in 1991. Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus is an award-winning chorus that has built a solid reputation for musical excellence and dynamic programming. TCGMC is also a member of GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses). The organization was formed to build community through music while pursuing musical excellence in performance. Chorus members are inviting audience members to bring items for holiday baskets to be donated to The Aliveness Project who will be standing ready at a table in the lobby.

For tickets and information, call Box Office at (612) 624-2345 or visit online at <https://tickets.umn.edu>. □

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IN THE fall of 1969, a few months after the Stonewall Riot in New York City that catalyzed Gay Liberation, The Town House in St. Paul became a gay bar. Now, it's the oldest GLBT establishment in St. Paul and the third-oldest one in the Twin Cities.

Since April, light rail transit (LRT) construction on University Avenue by The Town House proved quite a challenge for it. But free parking next to the bar—which will continue—helped. Fortunately, the roadwork was scheduled to be completed by November 30.

Holly Monnett, who has worked at The Town House since 1974 and owned it since 1987, says, "Our loyal customers let us emerge from the LRT situation stronger than ever! We're really a melting pot of ev-

ery component of our diverse local GLBT community where everyone can fit in—everybody's welcome. Our wonderful staff is the best anywhere."

According to Monnett, The Town House's four-decade success story stems from its popular mix of low prices and entertainment. It has the Original Cheapie Night Wednesdays, plus other such nights the first and last Friday every month, along with a daily \$10.50 beer bust. Every evening offers a cornucopia of entertainment, including karaoke four times weekly and impersonator shows three times weekly.

On December 10, The Town House is hosting a dual celebration of its 42nd GLBT anniversary and the LRT construction completion.

The event calendar is as follows:

- 3:00 PM
Retro Dance Music with DJ Erik
- 4:00 PM
YOLO Performance with Mia Dorr; complimentary food; free liquor and beer samples; door prizes
- 9:30 PM
Sparkle Show, hosted by Ti-Néa and Mary Brewster (Main Bar); Lori Doken at the piano (Lounge)

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LAVENDER



NO COAST CRAFT-O-RAMA | Joy Summers

On one lucky December weekend as snowflakes dance in the heart of the city wind swirls, throngs of hearty Minnesotans, wrapped in fat, knitted scarves and recycled material messenger bags stream through the doors of Midtown Global Market to attend the annual No Coast Craft-o-Rama. Lest you picture crafters as elderly ladies hawking stitched together doilies or bedazzled mom jeans, I must warn you that the word "crafter" has under gone a radical transformation since the days of Popsicle sticks. It is holiday gift central for anyone with an indie bent to a gift and wish list. To find out more about No Coast's origins and what to expect this year, I contacted Trish Hoskins, an organizer of No Coast as well as the owner of Crafty Planet. For the full interview and additional photos, go to www.LavenderMagazine.com.

Which are your Top 5 booths to visit this year?

All new vendors:

- Soup Hunter Guitars - Adam Kirsch

makes handmade wooden instruments www.souphunter.tumblr.com.

- Tiny Hands - Mei Pak's jewelry looks (and smells) good enough to eat (pictured), www.tinyhandsonline.com.

- ScutiePie Hot Pants - Lindsey is going to have her serger on hand to whip up custom hot pants while her customers wait. Talk about extreme crafting!

- Too Bad Mice - Grace's catnip cat toys had us rolling in the aisles and screaming, "OMG I must get a cat so that I have an excuse to buy some!" www.toobadmice.etsy.com.

- Local Produce - Local Produce will be offering gift wrapping services, as well as selling the supplies if you really must DIY. www.localproducempls.com

Any tips for first time attendees?

Bus or walk if you can. Carpooling with friends is also a great option! Parking is always a bit crazy.

- Come early and/or come late: first thing Friday to get the best selection and last thing Saturday when the crowds have thinned.



- Leave the strollers, bulky backpacks, etc. at home. It can get crowded!

- Be sure to pick up a program or at least a map. The vendors meander all over the place. You don't want to overlook anybody, trust me!

- Be sure to leave time to eat - the Midtown Global Market food vendors are awesome. I encourage you to eat often while you're there. You need to keep up your strength to shop!

Finally, take a deep breath and enjoy the hectic day! Everyone at the sale is very happy to see you! □

Details: Friday, December 2 (3 p.m. to 8 p.m.) and Saturday, December 3 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) at the Midtown Global Exchange building, Minneapolis. www.nocoastcraft.com



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OFF THE EATEN PATH | Heidi Fellner



THE AMSTERDAM BAR & HALL

Eat. Rock. Drink. Dance. Rock

The Amsterdam Bar & Hall draw sake city, complete with Dutch spir logo, which mimics the city's flag. A superpower, The Amsterdam atten a landscape that's not quite suited t 6 W 6th Street in downtown St. Pa stripped-down J Crew, and the Ams man, also of the 331club) know it. and rough up—the place hopefully v



ock some more.

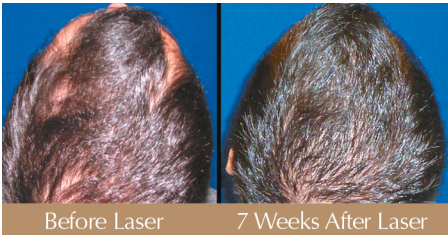
draws thematic inspiration from its name-spirits, traditional pub fare, and a triple X g. And, somewhat like the former colonial ttempts to carve out a European oasis in ed to the task. The former Pop!! space at . Paul has all the structural elements of a Amsterdam's owners (Jon and Jarret Oul- it. Their laudable attempts to Dutch-up- lly will gain more traction with time, ➔

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OFF THE EATEN PATH



(Clockwise from top left) Fried Eggplant, Roasted Tomato, House Cured Salmon Broodjes; Mussels; Pot Brownie.



and with a new entryway that's still under construction. But will this strange oasis blossom into a new east-river epicenter of live music? I only hope it fares better than that groovy little Dutch colony on Manhattan Island.

A full music schedule can be found online at www.amsterdambarandhall.com. But if you just stop by when the mood strikes, expect to find trivia on Mondays, folk and bluegrass during the week, and indie rock on the weekends. If you haven't been to the city of Amsterdam, or didn't stray far from the tourist-trodden paths, you might not fully appreciate the significance of the Dutch "table rugs" that decorate one stretch of wall, and if you weren't an art history major, you might not even notice that the booths are swathed in Dutch art. But the high tables that rim the hall are made for mingling and table-hopping, and if the decor lost you, the bar certainly won't.

For the real Netherlands experience, all you have to do is belly up to the bar, and order the Kopstootje (pronounced Kop-stoo-cha, \$8). It's a shot of old-school Dutch gin called genever (or jenever), served alongside a glass of Heineken. Gin and beer together? Yeah, when it's the good stuff. Here's the history on this one: the Dutch made this hooch by distilling malt wine, using herbs and juniper ber-

ries to add medicinal effects and smooth out the taste. However, kind of like they did with Manhattan, the British completely stole this idea and re-made it into a more white-washed product that they called gin, and then they slapped a picture of a beef-eater on the front.

The Amsterdam Bar & Hall stocks several genevers—no small feat. If you prefer more of a vodka taste with a hint of juniper, opt for one of the "jonge" genevers. If you like whisky or scotch, opt for an "oude" genever. The shot is poured to the very top, so the drinker must clasp their hands behind their back, bend from the waist and slurp the first bit. The rest of your drinking experience is entirely up to you. Kopstootje actually means "little head butt" in Dutch, but the result is much more pleasant.

After your "little head butt" genever, try one of the Amsterdam bar's cocktails containing the same. The Amsterdam (\$7) also contains Cointreau, mango and lemon, but it's surprisingly refreshing and not too sweet. Also, considering it contains oude genever, it's unbelievably smooth. The Rotterdam (\$7) is perky and pink, and comes in a martini glass. But with a masterful mix of genever, St. Germain, cranberry and champagne, it is both lively and complex.

If you need a quick bite, Broodjes are



reminiscent of sliders, and the Amsterdam whips up 17 different versions. We tried the House Cured Salmon (\$4.50), the Fried Eggplant (\$3.50) and the Roasted Tomato (\$3.50), but they also feature a traditional hamburger, and everything from chicken liver mousse to Dutch cheese. I thought the fried eggplant could have benefited from the addition of more garlic mayo, but all were very tasty and definitely up to the task.

We also tried the Mussels (\$9), which are steamed with vermouth, tomatoes and herbs, served with a hunk of toasted garlic bread to mop up the sauce, and a dollop of truly outstanding curry mayonnaise. As an appetizer, they're perfect for sharing with a small group, but as the restaurant doesn't provide side plates for shells and whatnot, your party had best be informal. For dessert, the warm Pot Brownie (\$4) may not contain any Jane, but more than makes up for it with luscious caramel and rich dark chocolate, topped with fresh whipped cream. It's good enough to fake a case of the munchies.

I sincerely hope the Amsterdam Bar and Hall continues to get its footing with the live music crowd. After all, it was the Dutch who originally brought coolness to the American colonies—why not to downtown St. Paul? □



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Les Miserable (Les Miz). Photo by Deen van Meer

➔ **Les Misérables (Les Miz)** — The 25th Anniversary Tour of the world's longest running musical is here in time for the Occupy Wall Street era. Hennepin Theatre Trust President Tom Hoch says "*Les Misérables* encompasses timeless themes including love, grace and redemption – themes that are as powerful today as they were in 1862 when Victor Hugo's novel was first published. The images of revolution in Egypt, Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East, and the clashes around the world between the rich and poor, demonstrate that the struggle for a better life has been a constant through human history." Dec. 6-18 • Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Av., Mpls. • (800) 859-7469 • www.hennepintheatretrust.org

I Am My Own Wife — Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf (1928 -2002), Berlin's most celebrated transvestite, during both the Communist and post-Communist era, saw her gender and sexuality in a way quite different than how they would be seen today. As playwright Doug Wright's has pointed out "Today, we're so sophisticated about what constitutes someone who is transvestite; what constitutes someone who is truly trans, and how that differs from homosexuality and all those issues. Charlotte was coming out of this 19th Century model that was iterated by sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who had this whole theory of three classes of gender: male, female, and a third catch all group for anyone in between. So Charlotte would always say there's "no war within me between male and female. I'm simply a member of the Third Sex. Female spirit in a male body and that's my biology and that's my fate and I'm completely at home in that construct." So it was a very different way of perceiving gender than I think we have today, where we're so binary about it."

The Von Mahlsdorf story is an epic one. Her father was a physically brutal Nazi army officer, yet others in her family accepted her as she was. She was not ashamed of her male genitalia and she said she liked being like a housewife because she felt she was naturally suited to that. She never wore a wig or make up and preferred to wear a simple house dress and shoes. She wasn't about being camp or a drag artist.

After the psychotically homophobic Hitler era, the Soviet Union oversaw the Communization of East Berlin. Unlike American Right Wing hyperbole, the so-called commies were not so sympathetic to so-called "fags" and you can guess that the "pinko" preceding that may have as much to do with homosexuality as it does with communism. In that time her home became a gathering place for queer folks when demolition was slated for a legendary gay bar dating from the post World War I Weimar Era. It was dismantled and restored in her basement. The upstairs became a museum.

Wright's play gives food for thought about the invasion of privacy. Rumors abounded that Von Mahlsdorf was a spy for the Stasi, East Germany's version of the KGB, but it must be remembered that the Stasi had recruited, by some accounts, one spy for every six people in East Germany. The Oscar-winning Best Foreign Language Film *The Lives of Others* portrays this Stasi phenomenon. A similar pattern is seen in today's Iran, which the recent lesbian-themed film *Circumstance* also portrays. In 2004, the year *I Am My Own Wife* won the Pulitzer and Tony, it struck an American nerve because the issue of Extraordinary Rendition implemented by The War on Terror was considered by many to be a shocking human rights violation that shredded constraints of the Geneva Convention.

When the Berlin Wall fell in the '80s Von Mahlsdorf simply appeared to the West as a 65 year old man wearing a dress in orthopedic shoes. Wright shaped an important bio-play that provides a fascinating inside look at the Eastern Bloc's underground queer subculture.

The Jungle revives its 2006 smash hit with the same solo star, Bradley Greenwald. His was the most acclaimed Twin Cities performance that year. Greenwald shares, "The tension of the play comes to terms with an amazing human story of survival that gets tarnished by the un-mythologized details of day-to-day existence."

Director Joel Sass says they're reviving it "for the same reason a climber repeatedly scales a challenging peak, or a hiker retraces a favorite route." **Through Dec. 18 • Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Av. S., Mpls. • (612) 822-7063 • www.jungletheater.org**

Cinderella — Rodgers and Hammerstein's glorious version of the classic fairy tale actually originated on CBS TV in 1957 starring Julie Andrews. In 1965, CBS remade it featuring Leslie Anne Warren and in 1997, ABC crossed the racial divide by casting Brandy as Cinderella. On stage at the Ordway Jessica Fredrickson is the star. You can also bet that the designs created by Penumbra Theatre's scenic shop and Tulle & Dye will be something to behold. Producing Artistic Director James Rocco says *Cinderella* reflects the Ordway's way of "re-visioning classics." **Dec. 13 – Jan. 1 • Ordway Center, 345 Washington St., St. Paul • (651) 224-4222 • www.ordway.org**

Joy: A Holiday Cabaret — The region's premier theater for persons with disabilities has become a first-rate producer of musical productions. This holiday season the versatile Aaron Gabriel is composing some new tunes. Scotty Reynolds who made quite a splash for "glittering" reparative therapist Marcus Bachmann's office will be performing along with the likes of Kevin Kling and Eriq Nelson. Director Tod Petersen says "I always want to make sure each and every actor—no matter what his or her gifts may or may not be—is given a voice in the process." **Through Dec. 17 • Lab Theater, 700 N. 1st St., Mpls. • (612) 333-7977 • www.labtheater.org**

A Reindeer Line — Kahlil Queen, who composed the compelling score for the anti-bullying musical, *MEAN*, is lightening up for the holidays with fun characters from different parts of the world. You'll hear some Salsa, some classical, and some Hip Hop. Queen says, "I'd call it a bit whimsical with some reflective moments as Rudolph discovers 'the Language of Christmas' and the meaning of 'being true to yourself.'" The show, as the title implies, is an inside look at reindeer who try out for the ultimate challenge: flying for Santa to deliver toys all over the planet! **Dec. 2-18 • Howard Conn Fine Arts Center, 1900 Nicollet Av., Mpls. • (612) 623-908 • www.youthperformanceco.org**



The Dining Room. Photo Courtesy of Act One, Too, Ltd

The Dining Room — A.R. Gurney is best known today for his widely produced comedy about a husband and his pooch (and the play's title), *Sylvia*. But a generation before his superb 1981 timebender was also widely produced. Director Lynn Musgrave calls it "a memorial, in many ways, to a way of life in decline – the comfortable, upper middle class White Anglo-Saxon Protestant environment in which he came of age. It's symbolized by the increasing "irrelevance" of what had been the heart of the home and family: the traditional dining room." Six actors portray 57 characters over the course of a "day" in a dining room from the 1930s Great Depression to contemporary times. They include a father in denial over his brother's sexuality and a daughter asking her father to take her and her undisciplined kids back under his roof while she chooses between her husband, her married paramour, and her lesbian lover. **Through Dec. 18 • Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Av., Mpls. • (612) 333-3010 • www.theatreintheround.org**

Plaid Tidings — The musical, *Forever Plaid*, has become a classic of 1950s-style nostalgic entertainment, with the early '60s thrown in for good measure. Its non-threatening featured male quartet, splendidly harmonic and sweet, is a refreshingly positive view of men in general. Their sound recalls The Four Freshmen, The Crewcuts, and The Lettermen. Regarding the holiday version, Music Director Andrew Cooke says it "pays fond but slightly irreverent tribute to those early TV holiday variety shows, starring the likes of Perry Como and Ed Sullivan." Sean Nugent stars. **Through Dec. 31 • Chanhassen Dinner Theaters, 501 W. 78th Av., Chanhassen • (952) 934-1525 • www.chanhassendinnertheatres.com**

Sloppy Joe Night

THE SENSES tonight pique nostalgic: sounds of sizzling in a frying pan, the fragrance of browning beef and crisping tater tots. It's sloppy joe night at my house, and friends are on their way.

The air is thick, full of taste, full of comfort. Pumpkins and gourds, heleniums and sunflowers, decorate my living room and kitchen. The atmosphere reminds me of my childhood. Autumn always resonates this way.

Tonight, tuxedos and hairspray have no place. My friends, typically glamorous and sparkling, show up in troves wearing pajama pants. My girls have traded their stilettos for tennis shoes; their makeup, for nothing. And my boys wear their uncharacteristically masculine tees and baggy jeans. We're completely ourselves tonight. No networking. No strangers to meet. Nothing but us, three pounds of beef, 120 tater tots, and two giant cans of Manwich.

We sip cheap wine and poke fun at our outfits. Mine: a tattered, over-sized Bears jersey, tiny red running shorts, mismatched socks. I'm informally voted the most tragic of the evening—an honor to

which I eloquently respond: "You don't have to eat my damn food!" I'm met with laughter and reciprocal sarcasm.

The weather is warm enough to dine outside, but chilly enough to use the fireplace. We listen to a random mix of dance music, Florence and the Machine, and old school Whitney—all of which are drowned out with laughter and chatter; the sound of people letting go.

New friends mix with old; an opportunity to connect those who'd perhaps otherwise never meet—where someone like my saucy Jaclyn meets for the first time the sweet and sharp newcomers from California, Peter and Buddy.

They are friends we all have— the charming and sophisticated, the hilarious and vulgar— all genuine, all gracious.

Too gracious, maybe. The evening closes with a dozen cookies, half a dozen cupcakes, and a bucket full of candy left over— contributions for the evening. The wine, of course, is always emptied. It will be my onus to either consume or re-gift the desserts.

Consider hosting your own sloppy joe night. For nostalgia, for coziness, for friends. Here's to letting go and not giving a damn. ■

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Philadelphia Skyline. Photo by G. Widman for GPTMC; Cheesesteak at Tony Luke. Photo by J. Varney for GPTMC; Old City. Photo by M. Kennedy for GPTMC.

City of Brotherly Love

I'M STANDING spellbound in one of our great national parks, listening to a ranger. No, not Yellowstone; not Glacier, but just as heart-stopping. Instead of the wind in my hair, it's taxi fumes. Wildlife is limited to folks ambling by with Macy's bags. I'm at Independence Hall, the epicenter of Philadelphia's lode of American history called Independence Park. I'm thrilled. I'm proud. I'm humble.

This is a theme park dedicated to our nation's roots, and Ranger Glenn Pateky is today's Imagineer. At Carpenters' Hall he declaims, "You are standing where the first steps were taken toward creating the United States." Gulp. He guides us through Old City Hall ("Alexander Hamilton argued cases here") and Independence Hall, "The single most important building. And the most important thing they did here," he continues, "was not just the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was the voting."

We're in the courtroom, where Ranger Glenn continues, like a TV host: "George Washington sat here in 1775; John Hancock," he points, "over there. And there, John Ad-

ams—the second-most important man"—each with his own inkwell and candlestick.

Nearby looms the Liberty Bell. I overhear visitors' murmurs in Russian, Chinese, and French as I gape at the symbol of our nation. Across the green lies the newly-unearthed President's Home, dedicated to telling the story of enslavement and those owned here by Washington himself. Across the street, the new Jewish Museum, in contrast, stands as homage to freedom from European pogroms; the first synagogue arose in 1773.

Just beyond the park stretches a cozy neighborhood of snug brick houses, including the home of Betsy Ross, the outline of Ben Franklin's abode (now lost), his resting place in the graveyard of Christ Church, and the Quaker Meeting Hall of 1803, which is still active. Elfreth's Alley claims honors as the nation's first residential street, still vibrant with 32 bright-shuttered brick homes just steps from more antique edifices, today serving as art galleries, wine bars and designer boutiques.

That's the near north. Head south in

this walkable city—below South Street—and you're transported from Revolutionary times to the equally tempestuous Little Italy, Rocky's turf (more on that later). Sidewalk fishmongers and produce peddlers fuse a tantalizing perfume, augmented by cheese shops, bakeries, and cafes such as Villa di Roma, advertising "gravy to go" for your "sangwich." Speaking of which: The battle continues on who's got the best Philly cheese steak—Pat's or (across the street) Geno's? But no question whose breakfast is primo—it's Sabrina's, where the stuffed French toast should be illegal.

On your way back, meander along Pine Street, crammed with shops hosting rare antiques, vintage clothes, and the oldest gay bookstore in the land, Giovanni's Room. It's not far from the city's mega-uber-ultra gayborhood, centered around Ground Zero, the heart of downtown, where it sports a dozen bars, a dozen more cafes, eight style/fitness salons and October's annual Outfest, with street dances, live entertainment, flea market and contests: penis-shaped bagel eating

to a high-heel race. (www.PhilllyPride.org).

OK, back to Rocky. Remember that movie moment when he raced up those endless steps? They're the frontispiece to the Museum of Art, which, along with the Barnes Collection, slated to open in 2012, is home to more Impressionist art than anywhere else in the world. And that's not counting the Rodin Museum, also on Museum Row.

Where to eat? Glad you asked. City Tavern, boasting a recipe from George Washington; Awada, a sweet tapas bar by top toque Jose Garces; Buddakan, with cosmo Asian eats (think Kobe sliders and edamame ravioli) in a cosmo setting; El Vez, a Mexican send-up of The King; Opa! for contemporary Greek cooking (loved the lamb shank; also the nectarine-watermelon salad); Zahar, a James Beard winner serving modern Israeli eats, including four kinds of hummus, spiced eggplant with couscous, and mushrooms with chickpea puree.

If you've a day or two to spare, hit the road for Valley Forge, the national park where the Continental Army famously wintered in 1777-78. Here, troops from 13 colonies became a united army, living in cabins they hastily built, while George rented an existing home to house his 25 attendants, including Martha—also France's Lafayette (age 19) and Alexander Hamilton, all of 22.

It's not far from the Brandywine Museum, converted from a riverside mill to showcase the works of the illustrious Wyeth family: painter N.C., his son Andrew, and Andrew's son Jamie. Their farmhouse is a far cry from the nearby Dupont estate (yes, that Dupont) called Longworth Gardens—200 acres of first-growth trees saved from a lumberyard's grasp aside lush garden beds the millionaire installed.

The Wharton Esherick Museum—actually the sculptor's workshop/home of 1913—is an organic dream-house of carved and inlaid wood, a la Frank Lloyd Wright, where the artist hobnobbed with the likes of Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson. "Useful is beautiful," he proclaimed, adding, "If it's not fun, it's not worth doing."

Marsha Brown endorses that maxim, too. She turned an old church—stained glass and all—into her eponymous emporium of Creole cooking in New Hope. Lance Shortt, who renovated a farmhouse from the 1700s into the stylish, 10-room Inn at Whitewing Farms, also swears by that credo. Before resting, dine at nearby Dilworthtown Inn, ca.1780, amid candlelight and crackling fires on treats like foie gras and rack of lamb.



(Clockwise from top left) Tavern on Camac; Knock; Voyeur. Photos by G. Widman for GPTMC

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Knock: New American meets global comfort food in a chic setting in the heart of the hood.

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Tabu: Segue from watching a game in the sports bar to relaxing in the lounge.

Tavern on Camac: Piano bar with a sing-along on the first floor and an intimate cabaret on the second. Ready to dance? DJ Salotta Tee will keep you bumping.

Uncles: A bar where gay men watch the world go by—small, intimate and slightly smoky.

Voyeur: a special events hotspot and after-hours club where the dancing continues well after 2 a.m.

Westbury: The moment you step through the door, heads may turn from the large, oval bar, but they're smiling at you. Cozy booths invite good group conversation.

Woody's: You'll know you've arrived in the Gayborhood when you see Woody's gay flags beckoning. This is classic, Philadelphia, a traditional first stop on any proper first visit to the Gayborhood.

EVENTS

U.S. Mr. Gay Competition

November 18-19, 2011

U.S. Mr. Gay returns to Philadelphia for the second year and welcomes contestants from 20 U.S. cities. Held at nightlife hotspot's Woody's and Voyeur, the culmination of competitions held across the country; the winner will advance to the international. Nightlifegay.com

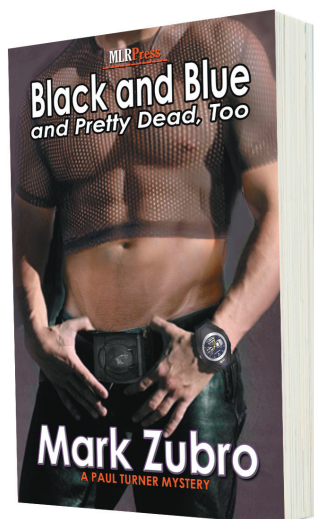
Pink Pub Crawl

Thanksgiving Eve

November 23, 2011 | Various locations

The Pink Pub Crawl is a bar crawl that hits some of the Gayborhood's liveliest spots, including Stir, Tabu, Woody's and Voyeur. Pinkpubcrawl.com

Website: gptmc.com or visitphilly.com



Black and Blue and Pretty Dead, Too: A Paul Turner Mystery

Mark Zubro

MLS Press

\$14.99

Black and Blue is the tenth book in the author's Paul Turner series, which includes Nerds Who Kill and Hook Line, and Homicide. Turner is a gay Chicago detective and father of two sons who, in this outing, is assigned with his partner Buck Fenwick to solve the murder of a fellow cop found dead at an underground leather festival. The investigation becomes mired in a morass of police corruption and cover-ups, involving top brass and A-list leather queens, and death of a teenager. Zubro has a feel for menace, conveying the grime and grittiness of subjects and surroundings—as well as Turner's gayness—to great effect. Also check out his Tom & Scott mysteries (Every-one's Dead but Us, etc.)



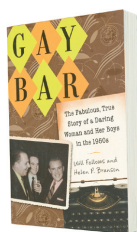
Southern Fried

Rob Rosen

MLR Press

\$14.99

Trip Jackson returns from the Big Apple after his wealthy grandmother's death to find himself enmeshed in the tangle of his Southern, dysfunctional family. Why had grandmother sent him into Yankee exile as a youngster after the death of his parents in a car crash then kept him at arm's length for years? Enmeshing also involves a steamy relationship with the plantation's stable boy Zeb, and the appearance of a mysterious stranger. Stir in intrigue, murder, and housekeeper Pearl, who whips up fried chicken and pies so rich you can taste them. What I'm saying is, The Brothers K it's not, but Southern Fried goes down easy whether on a beach blanket or under a robe by a crackling fire.



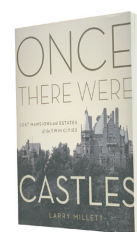
Gay Bar: The Fabulous, True Story of a Daring Woman and Her Boys in the 1950s

Will Fellows and Helen P. Branson

University of Wisconsin Press

\$26.95

Fellows, acclaimed author of Farm Boys and A Passion to Preserve, here explores an earlier work, a time capsule if you will, by a no-nonsense straight woman, Helen P. Branson. Owner and operator of a Los Angeles gay bar in the homophobic 1950s, at a time when California statutes forbade homosexuals even to gather in bars, Branson first published her memoir, Gay Bar, in 1957. To this original work, Fellows has now interleaved chapters commenting on those times, their legal, psychiatric- mores, and added his own comments to letters and publications of the period. Branson's words and actions paint her as a humane, hard-nosed woman, a divorced grandmother who watched over and treated "her boys" with humor, love, strictness, and respect.



Once There Were Castles: Lost Mansions and Estates of the Twin Cities

Larry Millett

University of Minnesota Press

\$39.95

Millett quotes a letter in the Minneapolis Tribune who in 1922 warned, "A certain penalty is attached to progress in that the city must hereby sacrifice a good deal of its poetry—for its poetry, to a large extent, lies in its old residences." Millett himself writes poetically about these grand old structures and the wealthy and eccentric who built them. At least 500 lost mansions and estates can be traced through records, which eventually succumbed to expansion, financial disasters and high maintenance. Millett examines 90 of these lost treasures, tracing with the equally fantastic and grandiose stories of their inhabitants with mesmerizing photographs and drawings. The book may well be read as a parable of our own parlous times.

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Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day, and in commemoration of the occasion, the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, headquartered at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, debunks the top 10 myths about HIV vaccine research.

Myth No. 1: HIV vaccines can give people HIV. HIV vaccines do not contain HIV and therefore a person cannot get HIV from the HIV vaccine. Some vaccines, like those for typhoid or polio, may contain a weak form of the virus they are protecting against, but this is not the case for HIV vaccines. Scientists make HIV vaccines so that they look like the real virus, but they do not contain any HIV. Think of it like a photocopy: It might look similar, but it isn't the original. In the past 25 years more than 30,000 volunteers have taken part in HIV vaccine studies worldwide, and no one has been infected with HIV by any of the vaccines tested - because they do not contain HIV.

Myth No. 2: An HIV vaccine already exists. There is no licensed vaccine against HIV or AIDS, but scientists are getting closer than ever before to developing an effective vaccine against HIV. In 2009, a large-scale vaccine study conducted in Thailand-called RV144 showed that a vaccine combination could prevent about 32 percent of new infections. Researchers are starting to understand why this vaccine combination worked and how to improve upon it. Researchers around the world continue to search for an HIV vaccine that is even more effective. Leading this effort is the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, the largest publicly funded group of HIV vaccine researchers in

the world. The HVTN is an international effort to find a safe and effective vaccine to stop the spread of HIV. It is funded by the U. S. National Institutes of Health.

Myth No. 3: Joining an HIV-vaccine study is like being a guinea pig. Unlike guinea pigs, people can say yes or no to participating in research. All study volunteers must go through a process called informed consent that ensures they understand all of the risks and benefits of being in a study, and those volunteers are reminded that they may leave a study at any time without losing rights or benefits. The HVTN takes great care in making sure people understand the study fully before they decide whether or not join. All HVTN research adheres to U.S. federal regulations on research, as well as the international standards for the countries in which it conducts research.

Myth No. 4: A person must be HIV positive to be in an HIV vaccine study. Not so. While some research groups are conducting studies of vaccines that might be used in people who are already infected with HIV, the vaccines being tested by the HVTN are preventive vaccines. They must be tested on volunteers who are not infected with HIV.

Myth No. 5: Vaccine researchers want study participants to practice unsafe


behaviors so they can see whether the vaccine really works. Not true. The safety of study participants is the No. 1 priority of HIV vaccine researchers and study site staff. Trained counselors work with study participants to help them develop an individual plan on how to keep from contracting HIV. Participants also are given supplies such as condoms and lubricant as well as instructions on how to use them properly. HIV efficacy trials enroll thousands of participants over several years, and with even with the best counseling some participants will still become infected through their risky behavior. Changing human behavior is never easy; after all, many people still smoke, even though it is widely known that smoking is the major cause of lung cancer. An AIDS epidemic would not exist if prevention was as simple as counseling people to change their risky behavior.

Myth No. 6: Now that there are pills that can prevent HIV infection, an HIV vaccine is no longer necessary. HIV-negative people who are at high risk can take antiretroviral medication daily to try to lower their chances of becoming infected if they are exposed to the virus. This type of therapy - called PrEP, short for PreExposure Prophylaxis - has been shown to be effective among those at high risk. However, it has not yet been recommended for widespread use. PrEP is unlikely to be an option for everyone because the pills are expensive and are not always covered by insurance, may cause side effects, and not everyone has access to them. Remembering to take a pill every day is also challenging for some people. The most effective way to eliminate a disease is by using an effective vaccine. It was a vaccine that eliminated small pox and has almost eliminated polio. Most likely it will be an HIV vaccine that eliminates HIV from the world. Vaccines are an effective, affordable and practical option.

Myth No. 7: An HIV vaccine is unnecessary because AIDS is easily treated and controlled, just like diabetes. While treatment for AIDS has dramatically improved over the last 30 years, it is no substitute for prevention. Current HIV medications are very expensive, and there are also many side effects. Sometimes people develop drug resistance and have to change the regimen of pills they take. Access to these drugs for the uninsured in the U.S. and those in the developing world is also very limited.

Myth No. 8: The search for an HIV vaccine has been going on for a long time and it's just not possible to find one that works. The science of HIV-vaccine development is challenging, but scientific understanding continues to improve all the time. In just the past two years there have been promising results from the RV144 study in Thailand as well as exciting laboratory work, such as the discovery of new broadly neutralizing antibodies against HIV. HIV is a powerful opponent, but scientists are constantly learning from one another and using advanced technology to fight it. Science has come a long way in the 30 years since AIDS was discovered. In comparing preventive HIV vaccine work to other vaccine development, the time it has taken is not so surprising; the polio vaccine took 47 years to develop.

Myth No. 9: Vaccines cause autism and just aren't safe. This is not true. Numerous studies in the past decade have found this claim to be false. The British doctor who originally published the finding about vaccines and autism has since been found to have falsified his data. There is actually no link between childhood vaccination and autism. It is true that vaccines often have side effects, but those are typically temporary (like a sore arm, low fever, muscle aches and pains) and go away after a day or two. The value of protection to vaccinated individuals and to the public has made vaccines one of the top public health measures in history, second only to having a clean water supply.

Myth No. 10: People who aren't at risk don't need an HIV vaccine. A person currently may not be at risk for HIV, but life situations can change along with disease risk. Such a vaccine also may be important for one's children or other family members and friends. By being knowledgeable about preventive HIV vaccine research, a person can be part of the solution by educating friends and family about the importance of such research and debunking the myths that surround it. Even if a person is not at risk, he or she can be part of the effort to find a vaccine that will hopefully save the lives of millions of people worldwide. To learn more or find out how to get involved in an HIV vaccine study, please visit www.hvtn.org 

For more information, please visit www.hfcr.org.

LAVENDER FIRST THURSDAY

HELL'S KITCHEN, NOVEMBER 3



Photo by Sophia Hantzes



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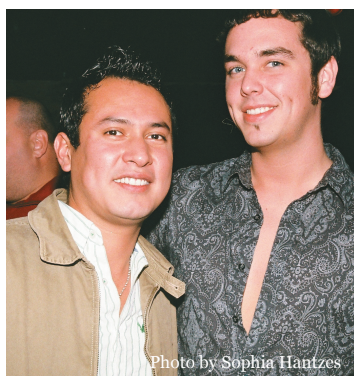


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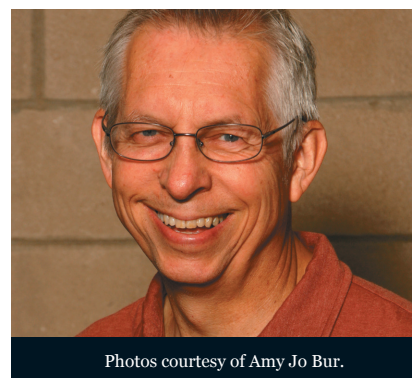


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E.B. Boatner



Photos courtesy of Amy Jo Bur.



Photos courtesy of Amy Jo Bur.

Minnesota United Methodist Clergy sign Equality in Christian Marriage Statement

On September 19th, 77 United Methodist clergy in ministry in Minnesota released a statement affirming they will offer the Church's blessing to any prepared couple desiring Christian marriage, regardless of gender. Before signing, they had to consider both the United Methodist social principle urging families and churches "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" and to be "in ministry for and with all persons," and the church's Book of Discipline, banning officiating at marriages for gay couples. The statement was released the same day OutFront Minnesota launched a campaign to oppose a proposed, state constitutional amendment to limit marriage to heterosexual couples. "Our call as clergy is to offer God's blessing to all who come to us," said Rev. Dr. Bruce Robbins. "We can offer the blessing of Christian marriage to all prepared couples, including same-sex couples, regardless of civil law. And so we shall."

*Since the 19th, 78 United Methodist clergy have signed the statement; pictured above, Amy Jo Burr and Bruce Robbins.

How To Host a Food Swap

I LEARNED many invaluable lessons this summer. One was that pickling is really just boiling – shockingly simple. Who knew? Also, making jam? A breeze. I was astounded by my new-found talents. Armed with this knowledge I was able to wield jewel hued Ball jars as presents to the occasional murmur of surprise and wonder. I was filled with shimmering pride, arriving at friend's homes with a tiny homemade gift and inspiring a sigh of appreciation and perhaps a twinge of envy in their eyes. "I can't believe she made those," in hushed tones from the cupboard. Oh yeah, I made the water hot.

Still, there are many other culinary gifts I've yet to master – like bread. I cannot bake a decent loaf of bread to save my life and I have tried. I've also never so much as considered a chutney or believed I had the time, inclination, or space to raise a laying hen. Luckily for me, my friends have. From airy loaves and infused olive oils, to beautifully knitted blankets and delicate jewelry, I'm surrounded by astounding talent. What better way to celebrate those talents than by arranging a gift swap?

For tips and advice about how to pull together such a gathering, I reached out to Kim Christensen, who along with Mandy Ellerton and A-K Thordin, runs the Minneapolis Food Swappers, a monthly gathering where people bring in their homemade wares to swap for others.

"Not every item has to be something amazingly over the top like at our last swap we had a woman bring in wild rice that she'd harvested herself by hand – or we also had some homemade Limoncello. It's not necessary to go that fancy. Maybe you're an incredible muffin maker and to you baking off a couple of dozen muffins is no big deal. To someone else they might be the most amazing muffins ever created. We have chefs to

people new to cooking [who participate.]"

The Minneapolis Food Swappers group was inspired by a Brooklyn based food swap group that has since become a national movement. The Minneapolis chapter gathers once a month at Open Arms and has fast become a hot ticket for food crafty types in town. Christensen was kind enough to share her top 5 tips for a successful swap:

1. Set up lots of tables. A table can be just a board set between two chairs, but you want to have plenty of room for people to display their wares.

2. Swaps work best if it's a one to one trade. Keep this in mind when packaging your items, cookies wrapped together by the half dozen to trade for one pint of jam. Make it clear what and how much is up for trade.

3. Print out swap sheets (available at mplsswappers.wordpress.com) The swaps usually go in two rounds, first is like a silent auction, with everyone bidding for what they like. Round two is usually assessing what you have left and what everyone else has remaining.

4. Don't be afraid to say no to a bid, and don't take it too personally if your bid is turned down. It's not personal, taste is subjective. Just because someone doesn't care for your chutney, doesn't mean they don't dig you.

5. Bring samples. Not only does it help you push your product, but it adds to the festive atmosphere.

The most important thing is to be aware of food safety. The gift of botulism or e. coli is nothing you want to share with friends; be clean and be careful.



Photo by Joy Summers

C'MERE HONEY BUTTER RECIPE

- 1 stick or 1/4 lb of butter
- 1 Tablespoon quality honey (like Ames Farm)
- 1 Tablespoon organic navel orange zest
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger

Mix in a bowl and wrap in wax paper. Allow at least one day to let flavors meld. Keeps in the freezer for up to 6 months.



Photo Courtesy of John Michael Lerma

Reminisce, Stress Less

CHRISTMAS WASN'T about anxiety until 5th grade. It used to be the odor of pine in the living room, colorful lights attached to our farmhouse, and the anticipation of Santa's arrival at Montgomery Wards. After 5th grade, I greeted the holiday with an anxiety only Charlie Brown could comprehend. But as the years passed and I'm now in Act II of my life, the holidays aren't so bad—once I took control.

Taking control didn't happen at once. In my twenties, I had "Dynasty" to compete with so I secured two thousand lights on my Christmas tree, purchased fabulous ornaments from Dayton's, and served strawberries dipped in chocolate at my holiday gatherings. This wasn't easy on my part-time salary from the men's clothing store or student loans.

Back then I learned to live well—or at least act like it. I learned to cook and prepare food skillfully while growing up on the farm. If Piggly Wiggly carried strawberries during the holidays they weren't organic. But once dipped in Hersey's chocolate, placed on paper lace, and set on a silver tray found at a thrift store they became legend, "Would you care for strawberries flown in from Chile dipped in Belgian chocolate...just for you?" My holiday gatherings were a success.

In my thirties, it wasn't about showing off my plumage because I started to grow comfortable in my skin. The holidays began to mean something different—a time to reflect, enjoy friends, and help others. I still decorated the heck out of my house but what could I do? I had Rubbermaid containers filled with Dayton's Christmas clearance.

One year, near Thanksgiving, I met a young officer from the South stationed at the Air Force base outside of town. We spent our first night together on base in the MP barracks where he lived paging through his photo albums and tales of his family and home. The next morning the base went on alert and I had to sneak off base but while doing so an idea hit me. That year "Orphan Thanksgiving" was born.

So, I began inviting service personnel that had no where to go for holiday dinners. We had an amazing time and life long friendships happened. When I moved to the Twin Cities in 1997, I brought this tradition with me but people began to tell their families they weren't coming home for the holidays. They secretly wanted to come to "Orphan Christmas" or "Orphan Easter".

Now at age 50, I feel I have the wisdom of Grandpa Walton and the confidence of Martha Stewart. However anxiety still sneaks in to try

and mess up holiday plans. So I started to write lists and assigned items a number to designate what must be done in order of importance. I also calendar everything—even my "playtime" with my best friend Dan Kenward (Margo from Fargo—The Nancy Boys). I will list it as "Dan Day" because paling around is good for both of us but gets me out of my head and away from my career for a few fun hours.

I don't have an orthodox career but one that is public and holidays become surreal. My point- this week I am filming Thanksgiving dinner in front of a live audience one week before the actual holiday. Then next week I'm filming another holiday special and I have my own "real" dinner to prepare. But I don't have to be perfect; just organized.

My planning sessions are simple; for home, television/radio appearances, private events, or live demonstrations, I select recipes, create grocery lists, and staple a copy of the recipe to that grocery list. I make sure I have time off before each event to prep and understand the time line of what I'm cooking or baking.

If you're not a cook, visit restaurants or contact a private chef and plan early. They should do all the work for you—even the dishes.

Shopping for gifts can be pleasurable and free of anxiety if you release yourself from expectations. You don't need to dress up, find parking, and fight crowds. I watch or record shopping channels and utilize on-line shopping as most shipping is free. Try something different and give a gift certificate for a culinary class. It's a gift that will be appreciated for years.

It took 30 some years to get over the anxiety of expectation during the holidays and it was my own fault. I was the one holding my hand up to play Santa Clause in the school pageant and I wasn't listening when Santa was chosen. I kept my hand up and became the Christmas hippopotamus for the number, "I want a hippopotamus for Christmas." Any permanent scarring was my own fault and we do this to ourselves especially during the holidays. Had I embraced my inner hippopotamus, who knows? Maybe I would have traveled to Chile for those strawberries. □

John Michael Lerma is a local chef, author, "lifestyle guru" and Food Network personality. His company Garden County Cooking offers cookbooks, cooking classes, consulting, private/corporate events, and culinary vacations to Tuscany, Italy. He also teaches food writing at The Loft Literary Center and a regular on Twin Cities Live (KSTP Channel 5). www.GardenCountyCooking.comShare.



CATERING KNOW-HOW

When it comes to holiday parties, you don't have to do it all yourself

WITH ALL the excesses of the holiday season, the only thing we are guaranteed is a shortage of time to create the magic. So taking advice from a wiser, more socially savvy person, Mrs. P (Edward's mother) we learned to share our vision with a fine caterer and write the check.

It seemed only appropriate that we would give Heidi Andermack and Amy Brown of Chowgirls Killer Catering a call, to chat. Since 2004, Chowgirls has been producing some of the best parties in town. Their focus is on fresh, organic ingredients prepared in-house. With an 80-person staff to handle everything from planning, food prep, finding a venue, bar service and floral, Chowgirls can simplify your entertaining process.

Knowing what kind of party you want to have is the first step before hiring a caterer. One of our favorite ways to entertain is hosting a brunch. It's a simple early afternoon gathering of friends that doesn't tie up the evening for your guests, who may be off to other holiday parties. With a simple party, you may want to take advantage of catering drop-off service. Freshly prepared quiche, perfectly sliced fruit and fresh-squeezed juices arriving at your doorstep saves you the hassle of waking up early.

We also love the cocktail party for holiday entertaining, but in our book, a cocktail party is really a kind of open house. Guests can arrive a little late and aren't obligated to stay for the entire evening. It's the perfect party on a busy weekend when many of your guests have more than one commitment. The provisions are canapés and other bite-sized appetizers. Chowgirls creates marvelous cheese and antipasto platters, in addition to a slew of hot and cold finger foods. We definitely recommend their Maple-bacon-pecan tartlet to keep guests talking.

Amy Brown advises using a bartender for parties of 40 or more. Having someone on hand to prepare your beverages not only keeps the party moving, it keeps your guests happy and safe. A bar doesn't have to be a full bar—remember our old rule of sticking to one or two items on the menu (plus one for the teetotalers). Your caterer's bar service should include handcrafted specialty cocktails, in addition to basic beer and wine selections.

A dinner party, even if you only have one or two courses, is the most formal holiday party. It is a commitment of the evening for guests (sneaking out early is the height of rudeness.) Hiring a caterer can make this a very easy experience for you. The catering staff can take care of everything from plating of the meal, to beverage service, to clean-up. If you're a little more experienced at entertaining, a simple drop-off service of hot prepared foods or even ready-to-cook items could be all you need to deal with your time constraints.

One thing you'll need for any holiday entertaining is a checklist. Having an idea of your needs before contacting a caterer will make hiring one a snap. The sales staff at Chowgirls provided this helpful list of questions to get you started:

- How many guests?
- What is your budget?
- How much would you like to spend per person?
- Is a kitchen accessible?
- Is the event formal or casual?
- Indoors or out?
- Any special dietary needs?
- Do you need supplies such as plates and glassware?
- Is it a drop-off service or do you need staff to stay through cleanup?

Know the limitations of your venue. With the question of an accessible kitchen come others: "Do I have space for the guests? Where will I place a bar?" In general, if the catering staff is on-site, they don't want to work in the middle of the kitchen while it's full of guests. A little space planning goes a long way.

Another common question is: "Do I tip a caterer?" That depends. Is there a gratuity included in the price? Your salesperson should be able to answer that question, but generally it's 12-20 percent of the total cost of the event. Guests shouldn't feel obligated to tip either, except with a cash bar.

Hiring a good caterer adds the air of sophistication that your party deserves. We've all seen, as one friend refers to it, the Mrs. Costco spread. Thanks, but save that buffet for your Super Bowl party in January.

So, step up your entertaining game and you'll be rewarded with memorable food and rave reviews. As Chowgirl Amy Brown says, "Trust your sales representative. They are the gateway to a good menu and a successful party."

Hop online a check out your local caterers. With the crunch of the season, why not give yourself a gift and save the dishes for someone else?

Chowgirls is available for private parties in addition to events at many public venues across the Twin Cities. They also have a unique private dining space adjacent to their kitchen, the Chowgirls Parlor. The venue is easily accessible at the heart of the 13th Avenue NE Arts District.

Chowgirls Killer Catering

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www.chowgirls.net

Mintáhoe Catering & Events

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O Christmas Tree!

IF YOU haven't picked out the absolute best tree or fresh holiday greens yet, don't fret. Fresher is always better when it comes to holiday greenery. Here are a few pointers on how to choose, transport, and care for your tree throughout the holiday season.

Choose your tree and greens from a trusted source—somewhere that takes pride in seeking out top quality and freshness with fair pricing, and offers a great selection to choose from. Don't be afraid to ask when the trees were harvested. The right answer is: shortly before Thanksgiving and then wrapped, stored, and covered out of the sun, heat, and wind. Take a tour of your options at the garden center and spin a few trees until you find just the one. I steer clear of flocked, painted and artificial trees for aesthetic and environmental reasons. Plus with so many naturally beautiful choices who needs them. Here are a few of my favorite holiday tree varieties.

MY FAVORITE 5 TREES:

Noble Fir (*Abies procera*) Typically grown on the west coast, Noble Firs are sturdy and robust, with excellent needle retention and durability throughout the season. They are slower growing than most Christmas trees, so expect a higher price tag for the extra years spent in the grower's field. Noble Firs are the deepest green of the firs, with very durable double thick needles – an uncommon, but fabulous fir.

North Carolina Fraser Fir (*Abies fraseri*) Fraser Firs are popular choice in these parts and have a faithful following that wouldn't fathom having anything else. Deserving of this fanfare, they are often considered the longest lasting of the firs, have sturdy branching and considered by many, the most beautiful tree available. I make an effort to buy North Carolina Fraser Firs because they will exhibit a beautiful silver undercast to their needles.

Grand Fir (*Abies grandis*) is a Christmas tree that lives up to its name. With their dark green color and shiny appearance,



Grand Fir needles have silvery undersides that reflect the Christmas tree lights for a beautiful effect. It has a powerful citrus-like evergreen scent and is, by far, the most fragrant Christmas tree.

Nova Scotia Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*) King of the firs for traditional fragrance. I seek out Balsams from Nova Scotia. Balsam firs in that part of the continent have double needles, giving the impression of a much fuller tree without the need of excessive shearing. This means a perfect shape with plenty of room for ornaments.

Natural Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea*) aka the Charlie Brown Usually Farmed right here in the Upper Midwest, these tall, thin, natural beauties are the real deal—without minimal or no shearing. If you want a tall tree, have lots of ornaments, but don't want to give up a lot of floor space, this is the tree for you.

Christmas trees are just like big cut flowers, so giving them a fresh cut before putting them in water is essential. A sharp saw will

do the trick or have the folks at the garden center cut at least one inch off the base before securing the tree to your car. After the fresh cut, you have about an hour to get the tree in the stand. Investing in a user-friendly, stress-free tree stand (I strongly recommend the Krinner brand) that will hold a lot of water is worth every dime when you consider a lifetime of easy tree installations ahead of you. Once the tree is in the stand, never let the stand of water dry out. If it does, the tree will seal itself off and will not rehydrate – so water, water, water. And BTW, no need for gimmicky tree preservatives, sugar, or Aspirin; just fresh, room temperature water. Once inside the house, the branches will drop and adjust, so give the tree 2-3 hours or overnight before you begin to string lights or decorate.

Happy Holidays! ■

Scott Endres is co-owner of Tangletown Gardens and Tangletown's Wise Acre Eatery on 54th and Nicollet in South Minneapolis.

Fiat 500

Photos by Randy Stern



If there was one automobile that North America had been waiting for – it's the Fiat 500. I've witnessed as much as I could from speculation to touching and feeling the real thing. The ultimate proof is driving one. So, I did.

The first impression I had about the Cinquecento was the reality of scale. When I evaluate B segment vehicles, I need to make sure that they make an impression in a market that could be welcoming or cold. You could say "cheap and cheerful," but that's not what Fiat had in mind for the 500. There is a serious feel to the retro design and a look that is engaging and pleasing to the eye. If you must compare it to something – the MINI Cooper is the first car that comes to mind. While BMW's British bulldog is squat and low in its presence, the 500 provides a taller, more amenable stance that fits right in many locales. I loved how it looked when it was introduced in Europe – I liked it better on the landscape of the Upper Midwest.

Inside, I was pleasantly pleased with the higher seating stance compared to the rest of B Segment. The Lounge hatchback model I drove had standard leather seats that were tastefully done. The drawback was I found the backrest to be pretty flat and lacking support. If you are looking for a glove to sit in, opt for the 500 Sport and its aggressive front seats.

The Lounge model comes well equipped, ranging from Sirius satellite radio, Blue-and-Me Bluetooth connectivity, the eco:Drive consumption monitoring program, a USB port for your iPod along with power windows and locks. The latter feature has an interesting action to it. If you tap the door latch away from you – the doors will lock. A very brilliant piece of ingenuity, I must say!

The single circular instrumentation pod can be confusing at first. Making up the pod, the speedometer is on the outside, the ta-

chometer on the second layer and a digital screen in the middle. You will appreciate the middle screen as it gives you everything you need to monitor your Cinquecento – from fuel and temperature gauges to information screens showing you your radio station and song to your fuel economy data.

Under the hood is Fiat's own MultiAir 1.4litre four-banger. Translation: It's Fiat's best engine and the company's calling card. The MultiAir goes about its business in a nice, relaxed manner to propel the 500 across the interstate system. My example was connected to a six-speed automatic gearbox that made easy work of both city and freeway conditions – something you don't often get in the B Segment.

There are a few more surprises about the 500. You get a completely solid ride and taut handling to manage any conditions you throw the Fiat into. It steers quite well and can be pretty loose in higher speed situations. To rectify this problem, you push in the Sport button right between the audio system and the climate control switches. Once you do, you will notice the difference in gearbox and engine response along with a tighter steering feel. Sure, you lose fuel consumption, but it's worth it on days when that opening in the left lane beckons during a typical rush hour in your town. Don't forget about stopping – the 500 does that extremely well, too! The brakes appear to be as strong as the MINI's, which means they're miles better than the rest of the segment.

Normally on reviews such as these, actual fuel economy is measured. Unfortunately, I was not able to get a reading due to the brief time behind the wheel. EPA fuel economy ratings, however, are 27MPG in the city, 34MPG on the highway with the automatic. Manual gearbox models are estimated to get up to 38MPG on the highway.

The price of admission may surprise you. The Lounge is the top hatchback model, with my example priced at \$21,500. You can get the less expensive Pop starting at \$16,000, if you are looking for high Italian style at an affordable price. My pick is the Sport – with some essential equipment and the 6-speed automatic gearbox, I could do this for under \$20,000.

This brief drive in the new 500 provided some insight as to Fiat's chances upon returning to the North American marketplace. The idea of selling a single model at a dealership is a risky venture. There had been successes – Hyundai 25 years ago with the Excel – and failures – Yugo and, to a lesser extent, smart. However, sales are picking up for the 500. In August, they sold three units short of the entire month's sales of the entire MINI brand.

The hatchback is not the only model Fiat is selling here. The 500C convertible is already turning heads and luring new customers to Fiat's "studios." In the pipeline are the special Gucci edition of the 500, an all-electric version and the ultimate enthusiast's Cinquecento – the Abarth. Expect these new models within the next twelve months.

If one drive in a Fiat 500 is any indicator, they are very serious ensuring this return to our market is a very long one. Will that convince you to put the 500 on your shopping list? If the 53.5% ownership of Chrysler, the production of the MultiAir motor in Michigan along with the final assembly of the 500 in Mexico on the old PT Cruiser line doesn't convince you – driving one will. Today's Cinquecento is a far cry from the 850s, Stradas and 128s of the past.

The wait is over. Fiat is back on our roads. It's worth a look...and a good drive. ◻

For full review with photos, go to www.lavendermagazine.com

**Dear Ms. Behavior:**

I am happily “married” to a great girl, for seven years now. I was previously married to a man and had had many hetero relationships up until I broke up with him to be with my girlfriend. Since I’ve been with her I haven’t wanted anybody else until now. It seemed like a record for me, but now...I’m in love with someone else. A guy, no less! I know he’s not the one for me forever and ever, but nevertheless I am incredibly attracted to him. What should I do? Is it possible to need both a male and female lover? Could it be that I was just missing a good, hard dick? My girlfriend, who is telepathic, knows about my lust and says, “Him or me.” Of course, I’m choosing her but I really want to have a full-blown affair with him. Help!

—SONIA

Dear Sonia:

The fact that it’s difficult to sustain intimacy and sexual excitement in a long-term relationship is part of what keeps couples therapists, liquor stores, and Ms. Behavior so busy. But your waning lust for your girlfriend or even your attraction to an outside person doesn’t necessarily mean it’s over. It may just mean that something in your life or in your relationship needs to shift.

You say you dumped your husband to be with the woman you’re with now. And you know that the current male candidate wouldn’t be “forever and ever” either. There’s nothing wrong with going from re-

lationship to relationship if that’s what you actually want. But since you describe your relationship as happy, you might take at least a moment for a longer view; lust is intoxicating and fun, but will it ultimately make you happier than sustained love and intimacy? If the answer is yes, you’ll know what to do. Whatever you do, at least make it a conscious choice, rather than allowing it to “just happen,” which is a recipe for a lot of hair pulling and drama.

Even if your relationship with your girlfriend is destined to end, there’s no reason to make a mess of it. For example, your girlfriend has been clear about her feelings, so don’t just allow the straight dude to hang around until your girlfriend gets pissed off enough to finally dump you. Make your decision and then let your girlfriend make hers.

If you decide you’d like to try to stay with her, then it’s worth the effort to try to punch up the passion. If you need her to paddle you and call you a slut, or if she needs you to dress up as the pizza delivery boy, now’s the time to do it.

If you really feel you’re “just missing a good hard dick,” that’s easy; give your girlfriend seventy bucks for a strap-on and let her become the man of your dreams.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I have recently begun to reconcile with my ex-boyfriend, who I was with for three years. He is in an urban setting working in a

sex club and admits to getting sex five or six nights a week. I am stuck in the boonies for at least a year with a job that is great for me professionally.

My problem is that I am jealous that he gets all that sex, and I am lucky to score once a month. I am about as horny as horny gets. I am also scared that with so many partners he will again contract a sexually transmitted disease. Fortunately, the one he got previously during our time together was treatable.

Should I get back together with him? He says he loves me, and is willing to move here with me. But I’m afraid about the disease risk and that he will start having multiple partners and make me the laughing stock of the gay community, which is small.

Also, what do I do about being horny all the time? Cold showers and masturbation just don’t work.

—A.

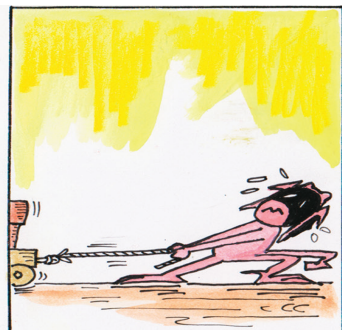
Dear A.:

It sounds like you’re not happy with your apparently open relationship. If that’s true, and your boyfriend won’t agree to anything different, he may not be the one for you. Think about that before allowing him to move in with you. Save your tear-soaked tissues for something that isn’t so predictable.

Masturbation does not fulfill the need for closeness, companionship, or love. But if it doesn’t help your horniness, you’re probably not doing it right. □

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POR RODRO



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Pivoting

THERE'S A beautiful picture propped on a dresser in my bedroom, a reminder of my former life. It's a large pastel drawing of two young black-haired girls, who are holding big sticks of chalk—yellow, blue, and orange—coloring the words, “Welcome Home,” on a driveway. The scene is speckled with gray and white, dappled sunlight filtering through a tuft of leaves from an unseen looming tree.

Lydia, my ex-wife, gave me that picture years ago, when I was secretly struggling over whether to leave for my own life as a woman. On the surface, the picture was about our daughters, who often drew messages—“Love you Daddy”—or pictures on our driveway. Sometimes, I joined in, chalking crude rainbows or silly looking animals.

But underneath, the dappled sunlight picture represented something else, the idea of home, a place where I belonged, even if in the wrong gender. We loved each other as we made our respective ways through the world, together. In the house connected to the chalked-on driveway, we nurtured and played and giggled until eventually—at the very end—we cried.

In the time since I left to begin my gender journey, I've not felt a sense of home. Yes, I have a place of my own, but it hasn't been a home. Instead, it's simply been where I live.

I don't think my feeling of lost home is much different than what anyone else

feels when they've experienced a major life change. Whether its transitioning genders or divorce or losing a partner or suffering a career crush, all of us move from before to after.

What I understand now is that I need to pivot from what was—the loss of home and family—to what is now, a new life where I get to breathe as Ellen. Home has to be is wherever I choose to be.

My enlightenment was triggered by a trip back to my old hometown, Cedar Rapids. I was there for the wedding of a friend's daughter, where I saw not only Lydia, but dozens of people I had once been close to. Most people had no clue who the smiling blonde woman in the black dress was. Eventually, word spread and people began approaching me at the reception. “Ellen, how great to see you!” several people said earnestly. Even Lydia, with whom I've again become good friends, was extremely welcoming. “I want you at our table,” she said, motioning to where her boyfriend was sitting.

A happily ever after ending, right? Not quite. As I watched my friend give his beautiful daughter away, it began to sink in—yes, I'm slow—that things really are different now. Neither of my daughters will ever have me walk them down an aisle.

And then there was Lydia, who I'll admit, I miss dearly. It was hard enough seeing her happy with someone else, let alone hearing

wedding toasts to the bride and groom's parents' longevity in each reaching 30 years of marriage. I'll never have that, I thought. Throw in that I'm the reason why my marriage ended, and well, let's just say I was crying me a river by night's end.

But then it occurred to me: I had gotten my body ready for Ellen but not my head. For sure, I've spent years in therapy (I lost track at year 12), but that was aimed at getting me to accept myself as female, and I'm there, for sure. This isn't about regrets or wanting to go back.

Hell, there's no way I'd ever return to being a man.

Instead, it's about embracing life and what it has offered me—a chance to start over, to live as me. How many people get to do that? It's a gift that I won't squander—not anymore.

As if needing further confirmation, I ran into one more person before leaving Cedar Rapids—the artist of my dappled sunlight painting. When told that her picture was central to my soon-to-be-finished memoir, she began to tear, saying she appreciated my words. Then I remarked that my trip home had been bittersweet. The artist answered, “Yes, but you can't have dappled sunlight without shadows.”

I thought for a second, and then something clicked. “So true,” I said, just as I found my smile again. □

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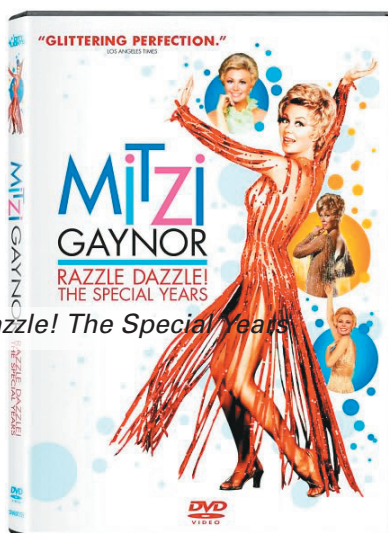
Wanda Wisdom's Gift GUIDE



1. Magic Wand Remote



2. Mitzi Gaynor: Razzle Dazzle! The Special Years



3. J&D's Everything Pack



4. aussieBum Vintage Brief



5. The Mothers-in-Law: The Complete Series DVD



Wanda Wisdom

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2. Mitzi Gaynor: Razzle Dazzle! The Special Years You probably remember her bouncing around the beach in South Pacific trying to wash "that man" right outta her hair, but did you know Mitzi Gaynor did a series of luscious television specials in the 1960s? The delicious dancing diva with legs for days tears up the technicolor stage in these specials with fancy footwork, an amazing voice, and Bob Mackie costumes only a true drag queen could love. **Price:** \$46.89 at BarnesandNoble.com

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5. The Mothers-in-Law: The Complete Series DVD I'll keep this one really simple. If you have someone on your list who knows the difference between Eve Arden and Elizabeth Arden, buy them this DVD. For the first time ever, this little-remembered but highly hilarious late-Sixties sitcom is available on DVD in its short, but sweet two year entirety. Eve Arden and Kaye Ballard kill with their hausfrau hi-jinx. Producer Desi Arnaz, who created the series after leaving Lucy, even makes a couple kooky cameos. **Price:** \$19.99 at Amazon.com

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The Hookup

PANTS FIRST.

No. Shoes first. Then belt. Then pants. Clothes off. My heart is too loud. Too fast.

Shirt next. Kissing. Lots of kissing. Passionate. Intense. Lip biting, face grabbing. Things move too fast around us. Room spins. The television is on. I don't care. I can't hear it. I hear and feel only the heartbeats. It beats so hard it hurts.

Fall on the bed. Toss and turn. Stomach in knots. The good kind. Sweat beads. Mixes. Stings our vision. Tastes salty. Wine spills from the nightstand. Red on carpet. So?

Mouth wash is the taste. Cologne, the smell. Skin, all of the above. It isn't passion. It's ferocity. It's going a million miles an hour in the same place. Standing still in the middle of a hurricane. It's the whole world crammed in a single moment.

Passion climaxes. The story enters its resolution. Nighttime and alcohol approve this message.

Morning comes and the wine is dried. CNN drones on. The clothes are as disheveled as they were—a floor-fashion eruption. The heartbeat has softened. The smells are almost the same. Cologne, yes. Breath, eh...

Question 1: Time? Find phone. Ignore those texts. Am I late for anything?

Question 2: Regret? Absorb the room in the daytime. Absorb him. Evaluate my judgment. Is it what I remember it being? Do I remember anything at all?

Question 3: Stay or go? Always go. If he is your knight, he will rescue you again. Leave politely. Graciously. He has a schedule, too.

Question 4: The cliffhanger. But will I see him again? Factors to include: his enthusiasm, my enthusiasm. Consider cuddling, and Question 2.

Question 5 (2 parts): What do I tell my friends? And how do I get home?

Our questions answer the overarching introspective: did I hookup last night?

We write entire romances in one night. One night might encompass Courtship, Honeymoon, Trial, and Heartbreak. It also often includes the optional foreword: alcohol. But that it lasted only one night doesn't mean it's a hookup; it doesn't necessitate the title "one-night stand" and the baggage (or lack of baggage) that comes with the label.

To the status quo, the term "hookup" packs a wallop. It references a dalliance with suggestions of poor judgment, and reflects one's grander ambitions. Someone who "hooks up" thus must also be a Slut. A hookup is meaningless. It's selfish and stereotypical. And it's fun. Acceptable to some and practiced by many. Contrary to popular belief, though, duration has no relation to the label. A "hookup" may last one night, or it may last many nights ("Friends with Benefits" or "Regular Lay," anyone?).

Likewise, romance—true and impassioned—may last one night only. When the

situation is unrequited. To our questions above, you regret nothing, you leave begrudgingly, and you have no hesitation that you want to see him (or her) again. When the answers to our questions point in this direction, the overarching answer is clear: we didn't hookup. This is more than a one-night stand because it was for me. Regardless of how he feels or whether or not I see him again.

When he decides not to call you; when, to him, the episode was one-night only, it becomes a hookup for him. Not for you. For you, a romance has taken place. Complete with your own tragic ending. To your friends, then, you answer honestly: "No, I didn't hookup." Smile.

Perhaps there is a sixth question we romantics should add to our list. One that we ask ourselves before we decide in our drunken stupor that he is the one: Can this wait for another time, maybe after we get to know one another? A million dollars say the answer is no, but it never hurts to ask.

I hookup. Rarely. Very rarely. OK, OK, I hardly have a sex life. By choice. I hope. It's not my style to have meaningless sex. You can do that with yourself. It's more to me to have a story. To make love instead of f—. To cuddle rather than feel indifference. To wish for more instead of an end. To close your eyes, cross your fingers, and hope that he feels the same. ■



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